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## CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

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*Report of the Committee on Composition and Rhetoric* is the title of a pamphlet on college and secondary English recently published by Harvard University. It treats exclusively of the subject as taught in preparatory schools, and contains many points, which, in a suggestive way, render it invaluable. Every teachershould read it carefully, for it bears upon the teaching of all branches. Even those who cannot agree with the conclusions and suggestions contained in it will find there much that is worthy of consideration.

The report is based upon material furnished by 1300 papers written by as many college students upon the good and bad aspects of their own early trainings in English, as seen in the light of their university studies. Their point of view is necessarily that of Harvard. The committee has wisely included in their report a large number of these papers from which the reader may draw his own conclusions. Indeed, for one who is studying methods and results in teaching English, they form the most important part of the pamphlet.

Coöperation is the chief point insisted upon in the report—coöperation on the part of teachers of other subjects with those of English. This is to be accomplished by requiring carefully written translations of both ancient and modern languages once or twice a week, and by papers in history, mathematics, and other subjects. This would make English an incidental as well as a direct study, so that the method would be beneficial to the pupil in a twofold manner. Language teachers, especially must be pressed into service. "The present slovenly, inexact oral method of rendering the classics into that lazy, mongrel dialect, 'Translation English,' can, and, as the examination papers show, should give way, at least in part, to daily written work." This would mean more work for both pupils and teachers, but it is at least worthy of a fair trial at the hands of language instructors. Good could not fail to result, to the pupils knowledge both of his mother tongue, and of the language being primarily studied. It would seem, too, that this method might do much towards

removing the drudgery and prejudice in and against which English teachers are obliged to work. Secondary school students ought to write every day, if they are to know how to express themselves by the time they graduate from college ; and the English teacher has neither time or energy to give this drill, unless assisted by his fellow workers.

Outside of a few really admirable schools, the committee finds two equally bad systems of preparatory English work. Either the subject is ignored, or the instructor attempts too advanced work. For the former there can no longer be any excuse. The school which does not teach English, after all the recent discussion of the subject, should be boycotted by parents and colleges. The latter evil cannot be so easily overcome. Ignorance of methods on the part of English teachers, and a lack of unity among the colleges and universities in their requirements for entrance examinations in English, are difficulties that must be done away with before we may talk seriously of ideal courses in preparatory English.

What the Harvard committee thinks about the scope of secondary instruction in English is seen in the following extract. "It is the University, and not the Preparatory School, which has to do with 'style' and 'individuality,' 'mass, coherence and form,' with, in a word, that much abused and misused branch of study known in educational parlance as 'Rhetoric.' The province of preparatory schools is to train the scholar, boy or girl, and train him or her thoroughly, in what can only be described as the elements and rudiments of written expression,— they should teach facile, clear penmanship, correct spelling, simple grammatical construction, and neat workmanlike mechanical execution." When this is done, the student will be able to "talk with the pen as well as with the tongue." This is not an inspiring task, but is it not the one which every good English teacher should set for himself?

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## NOTES

THE next meeting of the National Congress of Mothers will be held in Washington, D. C., beginning May 2 and ending May 7, 1898.

*European History Studies* No 5, for January 1898 (J. H. Miller, publisher), treats of the Achæan League, and presents in twelve pages selections made by Fred. Morrow Fling from Polybius. The divisions of his subjects are the